



# Expedition Air

## Online

News about Sixteenth Air Expeditionary Wing

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Italy, Germany, France, the Balkans and the Mediterranean

March 28, 2003

# War in the Middle East

## Tanker crews launch first combat support missions

By Capt. Shane Balken  
401st Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

**FROM THE MEDITERRANIAN REGION (USAFENS)**— While most people were just waking up and drinking their first cup of coffee, the first of several KC-135 aircrews from the 401st Air Expeditionary Wing launched combat support missions over the skies of Southwest Asia March 19.

Launching those initial missions could not have happened as smoothly without the assistance of one of the 16th Air Expeditionary Wing's downrange locations, however. The 99th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron played a pivotal role in the beddown of the 401st AEW.

"We consolidated our billeting and turned some of our buildings over to the 401st for housing for the first wave of incoming personnel," said Master Sgt. Randy Parsons, the former first sergeant of the 99th ERS who filled in as the senior enlisted advisor for the 401st AEW.

The 99th ERS and some 16th AEW staff personnel helped the 401st get itself organized with communication infrastructure, in-processing procedures and basic services like laundry and dining.

This support enabled the 401st to focus more quickly on the mission at hand.

A Grand Forks Air Force Base, N. D. aircrew took off in tanker 8879 or "el Diablo" as it's referred to in the 100th Air Refueling Wing at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England to refuel fully armed F-15Cs from Eglin AFB, Fla. and Langley AFB, Va.

"It was definitely a team effort all the way around today," said Col. Cathy Clothier, aircraft commander and Expeditionary

Operations Group commander for the tanker operations here. The 401st AEW has the largest contingent of KC-135 Stratotankers in the theater, and are due to receive more aircraft as the war over Iraq increases.

"Tuesday I briefed all of our aircrew about the upcoming operations and told them what we are about to do will change history. Not a single bomb gets dropped, not a single air-to-air engagement happens, or missile is fired unless tankers make it happen," said Col. Clothier.

Capt. Brian Mackey and 1st Lt. Ryan Budinko flew with the colonel, and both agreed that the mission was one of the most exciting flights they have flown on.

"I have deployed several times, but the atmosphere was different on this mission," said Capt. Mackey. "... and the range of experience from Col. Clothier all the way down to Airman (Edel) Brooks (boom operator) who flew on her first combat support mission."

The third youngest aircrew member in the 401st AEW, 20 year-old Airman Edel Brooks has been in the Air Force just over one year, and on March 19 was responsible for offloading 60,000 pounds of fuel to four heavily armed Eagles.

"It was great," said Airman Brooks. "I always get excited about flying, and today was really amazing. The day I stop getting excited about what I'm doing, is the day I need to think about doing something else."

The tanker crew flew within 15 miles of the Iraq border, and the initial flight wasn't without some tense moments explained Lt. Budinko, co-pilot for the mission.

"Prior to the air refueling, we showed up in the Egyptian airspace as an unidentified plane and were told to leave. The issue



Photo by Master Sgt. Mark Bucher

**An F-15C Eagle receives fuel high over Southwest Asia from a tanker assigned to the 401st Air Expeditionary Wing operating from an undisclosed location.**

was quickly resolved and we were able to continue with the mission," said Lt. Budinko. "It was a good learning experience, and we'll pass on the knowledge to help other crews stay alert to similar issues."

Production supervisors got together to decide which aircraft was the most reliable to fly the first sortie, and which crew chief deserved the recognition of having their jet take off first.

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# 16th AEW introduces new sortie scoreboard

By Senior Airman

Joshua G. Moshier

16th Air Expeditionary Wing

Public Affairs

The 16th Air Expeditionary Wing Headquarters, located at Aviano Air Base, Italy, has recently introduced its new sortie scoreboard.

The scoreboard reflects total refueling sorties flown by the 16th Expeditionary Operations Group, Le Tule Air Base, Istres, France, as well as the total number of aircraft processed by the 401st Expeditionary Air Base Group, Tuzla Air Base, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Other numbers tracked by the 16th AEW but not displayed on the scoreboard include branches of the military utilizing the refuelers, NATO countries using the refuelers, number of aircraft refueled and on what day, types of aircraft using our services, offloaded fuel, and length and duration missions are run.

According to Lt. Col. Randall DeGering, 16th AEW Vice Commander, the scoreboard is intended to reassure down-range units headquarters knows and cares about what they are doing, as well as letting those at Aviano AB not affiliated with



Photo by Senior Airman Joshua G. Moshier

**Airman 1st Class Doug Shavers, 16th Air Expeditionary Wing Command Section Administrator, Aviano Air Base, Italy, updates the scoreboard.**

the 16th AEW know what the mission is.

"This scoreboard will give the public insight into the Balkan operation that is still ongoing," said Senior Master Sgt. Tawnya Weber, 16th AEW Air Traffic Con-

trol and manager of the operations tracking program.

"It lets people know that NATO is still providing peace keeping forces and supplies to the area," said Weber.

## - WAR, from cover

"It was a unanimous decision," said Senior Master Sgt. Jesse Paul, a deployed senior maintenance supervisor for the KC-135 tanker fleet. "8879 has one of the best performance records and Staff Sgt. Ben Buzga (8879 dedicated crew

chief) has really worked hard. We can't give them pay raises but we can give them honors."

Sgt. Buzga, a six-year Air Force veteran, was told about the decision the day prior and only had one word to describe it - 'Wow.'

"I was really stoked about

the decision," said Sgt. Buzga.

"It's nice to see that people notice what we do, and it feels rewarding beyond any letters or papers that we might receive. Staff Sgt. Tony Contreras, Airman 1st Class Sean Browne and I all work on the aircraft and it was an honor for all of us," said Sgt. Buzga.

In the days ahead as more aircraft take off from here and provide the legs to get to the fight, the mission of the tankers is consistent...and teamwork imperative.

"We're ready for anything that comes our way," said Capt. Mackey.



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# Istres lieutenant colonel makes rank

A lieutenant colonel assigned to the 16th Air Expeditionary Wing was selected for promotion to colonel, the Air Force announced Feb. 6.

Lt. Col. Bill Hughes has been the deployed 16th Expeditionary Air Base Support Squadron commander with the 16th Expeditionary Operations Group at Le Tube Air Base near Istres, France, since mid-November. Brig. Gen. Tom Sheridan, director of requirements for Headquarters Air Force Space Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., broke the "well deserved" news via email because of timezone differences.

Lt Col. Hughes is Chief of the Future Concepts Branch for AFSPC, mostly working acquisition items for the nation's ICBM

fleet. A former launch officer for the Titan II system, the 22-year veteran received his commission through Officer Training School in 1981.

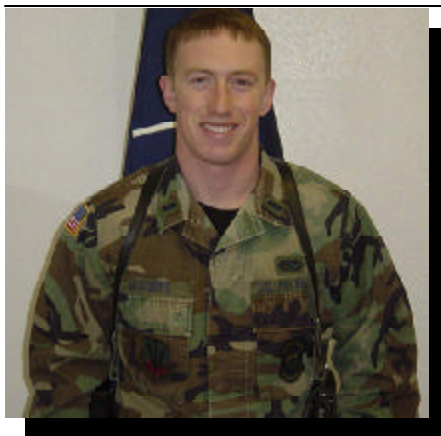
The board was held at the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, in December.

Selection statistics for the 2002B board were:

In the promotion zone: 45.9 percent select rate

Above the promotion zone: 0.8 percent select rate

Below the promotion zone: 2.9 percent select rate.



*Courtesy photo*

**1st Lt. Joshua Biggers**  
**401st EABG, Tuzla AB, B-H**  
**Company Grade**  
**Officer of the Year for**  
**Beale Air Force Base, Calif.**

## 16th AEW's March promotions

The 16th Air Expeditionary Wing saw six of its members promoted in the month of March. That list includes:



- ▶ Melissa Heibel  
401st Expeditionary Air Base Group
- ▶ Joy Palmer  
99th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron
- ▶ Ryan Youngsma  
99th ERS



- ▶ William Hock 99th ERS
- ▶ Nattawong Klungmontri 99th ERS



- ▶ Dawn Dunlop  
620th Expeditionary Air Base Group

## Briefly

### SPRING FORWARD FOR SUMMER:



Sunday, March 30 marks the beginning of European Summertime. European countries move the clocks forward one

hour at 2:00 a.m.

This is one week earlier than the time change in the United States, which is scheduled to "spring forward" April 6.

### OFFICIALS CLARIFY STOP LOSS:

Even though the Air Force has identified 99 career fields affected by Stop Loss, all personnel currently deployed are impacted as well.

Responding to erroneous news reports and some confusion in the ranks, officials are reemphasizing how Stop Loss affects deployed airmen.

All deployed airmen are effectively stop loss "in place" until they return from deployment, said Lt. Col. Rich Binger, chief of separations here.

"There is no 'stop movement,' assignment flow is not affected directly by Stop Loss," he said. "But people deployed will not be allowed to rotate home so they can voluntarily separate or retire from the service. They'll have to wait until their deployment is over," he said.

Of those returning from deployments, only those within the targeted career fields will remain in Stop Loss.

A waiver process is in place through local military personnel flights or deployed personnel units, officials said. The program, effective May 2, was enacted to ensure the Air Force had enough people in needed specialties to meet current mission requirements.

For more information about Stop-Loss, people can contact their local military personnel flight or the Air Force Personnel Center's Stop-Loss Control Center at (210) 565-2374 or DSN 665-2374

### EUCOM CHANGES FPCON POSTURE:

The commander of U.S. European Command directed a EUCOM-wide force protection posture change to Force Protection Condition Charlie. Stay vigilant and routinely check workareas.

# From the ground....UP

## All-female mission reflects spirit of Women's History Month

**By Major Adriane B. Craig**  
16th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

It wasn't so long ago that the percentage of the women in the military didn't even reach double digits. Now female numbers and positions they fill are — literally and figuratively — up.

According to the Air Force Personnel Center, 19 percent of the Air Force is now women. Demographics show this figure is up from roughly 14 percent just 10 years ago.

It has been a steady climb since the armed services — and especially the Air Force — opened more career fields to women.

Today Air Force women are able to serve in the majority of jobs and assignments stateside and overseas. The result has been more women in a variety of positions.

Earlier this year a KC-135 Stratotanker crew got to see the fruits of this evolution when an all-female ground crew launched a mission flown by an all-female aircrew.

The women were all deployed to the 16th Expeditionary Operations Group at Le Tube Air Base near Istres, France.

"It was really amazing," said Capt. Summer Fields, the aircraft commander for the refueling mission. "To think how much progress has been made through the years to make this possible just floors me."

The all-female mission was an oddity — but not entirely unplanned. The female crew had been scheduled for the Jan. 29 flight and a handful of female maintainers were also assigned.

Senior Master Sgt. Stuart "Biz" Bisland, maintenance supervisor for the 16th Expeditionary Operations Group at the time, thought it would be interesting to go ahead and fill the remainder of the assignments with all women.

"I got to looking around and realized that I had enough women to pull it off and thought it would be a fun thing to do," said Sgt. Bisland.



*Courtesy photo*

**The aircrew of the all-female mission was Tech. Sgt. Wanda Myers, boom operator, Capt Summer Fields, aircraft commander, and 1st Lt. Heather Adams, pilot.**

"I knew everyone was going to do a great job."

The ground crew was comprised of Tech. Sgt. Gwendolyn Nance, maintenance crew chief, 940th Maintenance Squadron, Tech. Sgt. Julie Sieving, assistant crew chief, of the 940th Logistics Group.

Rounding out the ground crew were marshallers Master Sgt. Gina Lee, Chief Master Sgt. Jessica Palmer, and Lt. Col. Abby Uptegraff, and Tech. Sgt. Cheryl Clemens. All are assigned to various units within the 940th Air Refueling Wing at Beale AFB, Calif.

Sgt. Nance, the crew chief for the mission, enjoyed being a part of the all female crew. "I felt a sense of pride and honor and esprit de corp."

Capt. Fields, a six-year veteran with more than 2,100 flying hours, is assigned to the 940th Air Refueling Squadron at Beale AFB, Calif. She said the all-female crews evoked a lot of interest — and pride.

"Everyone in the unit came out to

see us off," said Capt. Fields, "it was very exciting."

The other aircrew members were 1st Lt. Heather Jackson, pilot, and Tech. Sgt. Wanda Myers, boom operator. Both are from the 314th Air Refueling Squadron, also at Beale AFB.

The five-hour mission to refuel Navy F-18s was marred only by bad weather, including an impressive lightning storm.

Since that initial flight, the self-proclaimed "chick crew", now back at their home station, flies together more and more often.

"They schedule us together because they know we have fun together while still getting the job done," said Capt. Fields.

For the most part, the only difference with an all-female aircrew is the conversation in the cockpit.

But in reality, there is no mission difference — and that, really, is the point.

"I like being part of a team working towards a common goal whether that's with all women or not," said Capt. Fields.

# Lifeline



401st Expeditionary Air Base Group Air Traffic Controllers provide assistance for all aircraft at Tuzla Air Base, Bosnia-Herzegovina, establishing themselves as the lifeline for airfield operations.



(Above) Senior Airman Michelle Skinner, 401st EABG Air Traffic Controller, speaks with airfield management after an aircraft lands. Behind Airman Skinner are Senior Airman Heather Quincy, 401st EABG ATC, and Tech. Sgt. Pete Chambers, 401st EABG Watch Supervisor.

(Below) Airman Quincy speaks directly with an H-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot, controlling helicopter operations from the tower.



*Photos by Senior Airman Joshua G. Moshier*

Staff Sgt. Jennifer Hall, 401st EABG Air Traffic Control Watch Supervisor, watches for an incoming aircraft at Tuzla Air Base, Bosnia-Herzegovina. "We are the eyes on the ground for pilots," Sgt. Hall said.

